



## University of Pennsylvania ScholarlyCommons

---

GSE Publications

Graduate School of Education

---


4-16-2016

# Language and Voice

Nancy H. Hornberger

University of Pennsylvania, [nancyh@gse.upenn.edu](mailto:nancyh@gse.upenn.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://repository.upenn.edu/gse\\_pubs](https://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs)

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#), [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [International and Comparative Education Commons](#), and the [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Hornberger, N. H. (2016). Language and Voice. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 39 (3), 355-356. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2016.1238416>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. [https://repository.upenn.edu/gse\\_pubs/477](https://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/477)

For more information, please contact [repository@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:repository@pobox.upenn.edu).

---

# Language and Voice

## **Abstract**

These resources cannot be neglected much longer without lasting negative effects. While we have introduced here the idea of a “resource-language” to talk about cultural and linguistic maintenance, we must see the differences between these and material resources like coal and oil. We can leave the oil in the ground and it will still be there to use in a hundred years; the more we use it, and the more we use it unwisely, the less we have of it later. Just the opposite is true of language and culture. The more we use these, the more we have of them; but the longer we neglect their use, the closer we are to extinguishing them. That has already happened for some languages, and we may be starting to see the consequences. The world will end one day, and the overriding cause is more likely to be a shortage of such human resources as language and culture, which could aid in promoting international understanding, than a shortage of such physical resources as coal and oil. (Richard Ruiz, 1983 Ruiz, R. (1983). Ethnic group interests and the social good: Law and language in education. In W. A. Van Horne (Ed.), *Ethnicity, law and the social good* (Vol. 2, pp. 49–73). Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin System American Ethnic Studies Coordinating Committee/Urban Corridor Consortium. (Richard Ruiz, 1983, p. 65)

## **Disciplines**

Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education | Curriculum and Instruction | Education | Educational Administration and Supervision | Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research | Educational Methods | International and Comparative Education | Language and Literacy Education



Educational Linguistics Division  
3700 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6216  
[www.gse.upenn.edu](http://www.gse.upenn.edu)

*Bilingual Research Journal* 39(3)

Theme issue: *Research on Language Planning – 30 Years Plus*

Guest edited by: María E. Fránquiz, Kathy Escamilla, and Verónica Valdez

*Nancy H. Hornberger*

***Language and voice***

*These resources cannot be neglected much longer without lasting negative effects. While we have introduced here the idea of a "resource- language" to talk about cultural and linguistic maintenance, we must see the differences between these and material resources like coal and oil. We can leave the oil in the ground and it will still be there to use in a hundred years; the more we use it, and the more we use it unwisely, the less we have of it later. Just the opposite is true of language and culture. The more we use these, the more we have of them; but the longer we neglect their use, the closer we are to extinguishing them. That has already happened for some languages, and we may be starting to see the consequences. The world will end one day, and the overriding cause is more likely to be a shortage of such human resources as language and culture, which could aid in promoting international understanding, than a shortage of such physical resources as coal and oil.*

---Richard Ruiz, *Ethnic group interests and the social good* (1983), p. 65.

16 April 2016

Dear Richard,

It's now more than 30 years since we met -- you a newly promoted assistant professor and I a newly admitted Ph.D. student in Educational Policy Studies (EPS) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. You were assigned to me as my advisor, presumably because of our shared interest in language -- at the time a very low profile topic in EPS and sadly still so in some U.S. education policy circles. You memorably dubbed the small group of us who gathered around you the

LEPs, standing for Language and Education Planning in direct and playful critique of that other LEP label designating limited-English-proficient students, the then-popular nomenclature for language minoritized students in federal and state bilingual education policy. Then and through the decades following, we ploughed the language and education policy field, you mostly in Arizona and I mostly in Pennsylvania, although we did occasionally visit each other, overlap briefly at conferences, and even met up in far-away places like Limpopo, South Africa -- where we were both plenary speakers at the Southern African Applied Linguistics Association conference in 2004.

I've been thinking about some LEP firsts I experienced with you and about how far ahead of your time you were in your thinking. Just recently, as I read an article in our alma mater's alumni magazine about the ignominious eugenics era and the role of Harvard's President and prominent alumni in advocating for the Immigration Act of 1924 (Cohen 2016), I reflected that it was from you, as I sat in your language policy class, that I first learned about the Chinese Exclusion Act and the waves of language intolerance and immigration restriction that have characterized the United States throughout its history. It was around the same time, as I sat in your office on Bascom Hill, that I first heard you articulate your orientations to language planning that would shortly be published in the pages of this journal and become a paradigm-shifting contribution to the fields of bilingual education and language planning and policy. This special BRJ issue is, indeed, a marker of the profound and enduring influence of the orientations in language planning theory, practice, and research around the world. It was also your inspiration that prompted me to create my own course in language planning and policy in

education here at the University of Pennsylvania, which I have taught now for 30 years – our two courses being for many years among the very few being taught nationally or even internationally.

On a lighter note, it was with you that I submitted my first manuscript – on Quechua language planning and policy -- for journal publication, only to have it take the most unusual trajectory of any paper I ever submitted, ending in non-publication that both of us got a kick out of for many years afterward. I wish we had had more chances to work directly together but I am happy that we recently collaborated for several years on the *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* (AEQ) while I was editor. The virtual image remains with me of you and your associate editorial team seated around the table in Tucson in the early morning as you signed on at 8 am MST for our 11 am EST internal review meetings. That memory, and your invariable accompanying request for some oreos, always brings a smile to my face. I'm sorry we never did manage (or figure out how) to virtually supply those oreos. I was and am very, very grateful for those glimpses of your interaction with your colleagues and students in Language, Reading and Culture at University of Arizona and for your incisive comments and insights in those meetings and in the manuscript review process.

Those virtual AEQ meetings remind me of something else unique about you – the conversation with no prelude. When I first moved to Philadelphia from Madison in 1985 (before the days of email and internet communication), I would occasionally answer the phone to hear you practically in mid-sentence on some topic or other, with no preamble or greeting -- just your

inimitable voice and the expectation I'd know who it was. I have to admit it caught me off guard at first but as I got used to it, I appreciated the continuity and connectedness that conversational entry represented. The same was true of our AEQ meetings and even face-to-face encounters – I particularly remember a time when you met me at the airport in Tucson. There was something immediate and intimate about those seamless beginnings that I came to treasure.

*As much as language and voice are related, it is also important to distinguish between them. I have become convinced of the need for this distinction through a consideration of instances of language planning in which the "inclusion" of the language of a group has coincided with the exclusion of their voice.... Language is general, abstract, subject to a somewhat arbitrary normalization; voice is particular and concrete. Language has a life of its own—it exists even when it is suppressed; when voice is suppressed, it is not heard—it does not exist.... We should ask, what has happened to student voice? Assuming that students' language has been included in the curriculum, whose voice is heard in it if they are not active participants?... The point to be made is that voice and agency are central to critical pedagogy; without them there is no such thing as "empowerment."*

--- Richard Ruiz, *The empowerment of language minority students* (1991), pp. 219, 220, 223, 227.

Treasures you leave with us are not only our vivid memories of you as gentle mentor, generous colleague, warm friend, and noble human being, but also your unforgettable writings, always underpinned by a profound sense of social justice and hope. I have always been deeply inspired by your writings and am glad we got started on putting together a reader of your published and unpublished pieces (Hornberger, 2017). That collection, now lovingly complemented by colleagues' and students' essays in your honor, will be a treasure for generations of LEP scholars to come.

Yours with enduring affection and gratitude,

Nancy

References cited:

- Cohen, Adam (2016). "Harvard's eugenics era." *Harvard Magazine*. March-April, pp. 48-52.
- Hornberger, Nancy H., ed. (2017). *Honoring Richard Ruiz and his Work on Language Planning and Bilingual Education*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Ruiz, R. (1983). Ethnic group interests and the social good: Law and language in education. In W. A. Van Horne (Ed.), *Ethnicity, Law and the Social Good* (Vol. Volume 2, pp. 49-73). Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin System American Ethnic Studies Coordinating Committee/Urban Corridor Consortium.
- Ruiz, R. (1991). The empowerment of language-minority students. In C. Sleeter, ed., *Empowerment through multicultural education*, 217-227. Albany: SUNY Press.